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ENTERING *THE NEWSROOM*: THE SOCIOCULTURAL VALUE OF 'SEMI-FICTIONAL' ENTERTAINMENT AND POPULAR COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: This chapter analyses audience responses to HBO's *The Newsroom* to argue that its sociocultural value as entertainment programming lies not in its content as popular communication per se, but in the audience response to the show. I assert *The Newsroom* helps cultivate valuable discussion on journalism and, moreover, prompts political talk on many contemporary issues beyond. People watching Fox News, MSNBC, or HBO's *The Newsroom*, this chapter argues, can all be seen to engage with a genre that I dub semi-fictional entertainment, which: contains narrative elements traditionally associated with fiction; relies on real-world events and issues and allows audiences to fold these together as part of everyday sense-making and social orientation.

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When Ted Turner launched the Cable News Network on 1 June 1980 he opened the inaugural broadcast by stating,

> We won't be signing off until the world ends. We'll be on, we'll be covering it live, and that will be our last, last event. We'll play the national anthem for one time on the first of June, and that's all. When the end of the world comes, we'll play 'Nearer My God to Thee' before we sign off. (Wikipedia entry, 'History of CNN').

With that, the dream of cable news was born. Live, continuous, 24-hour coverage of the important news of the day – no event missed, no reportorial scoop left unexplored. Fast forward 33 years to Pew's *State of the News Media* report in 2013 and a slightly different reality seems to have emerged. In a special report on the 'Changing TV News Landscape' it notes:

> A separate analysis of cable in late 2012 finds that, overall, commentary and opinion are far more prevalent on the air throughout the day (63% of the airtime) than straight news reporting (37%). CNN is the only channel to offer more reporting (54%) than opinion (46%), though by a small margin. By far the highest percentage of opinion and commentary is on MSNBC (85% to 15% reporting). Fox was in between at 55% commentary and 45% reporting' (Pew 2013).

The report further noted that distinctions in terms of scheduling flow were also eroding; be it morning, noon, or night, opinion-oriented programming was in the ascendency. Such was the backdrop when HBO launched Aaron Sorkin's *The Newsroom* in June 2012, a 'behind-the-scenes look at the people who make a nightly cable-news program. […] the series tracks their quixotic mission to do the news well in the face of corporate and commercial obstacles – not to mention their own personal entanglements' (Newsroom, 2012).

Such observations on the state of cable news lend themselves to reproducing familiar critiques of commercialization and infotainment, and indeed such concerns underlie much of the narrative thrust of *The Newsroom*. While the program presents itself as fictional television, its narrative is clearly driven by critiquing cable news culture, practices, and ethics. However in this chapter, rather than tread a familiar path that would consider the content of *The Newsroom* in detail, I would like to use a different analytical lens that picks a point of departure anchored in how audiences respond to the show. In general, I argue that an audience-centred perspective on the functions of popular entertainment is crucial if we want theory that aligns with – and is testable against – people's lived experiences. More specifically, this chapter maintains that the sociocultural value of *The Newsroom* as entertainment programming lies not in its content *per se*, but in the audience response to the show. I assert that it helps cultivate valuable discussion on one of society's primary institutions for information dissemination, public communication, and civic awareness, namely journalism. Moreover, it prompts political talk on many contemporary issues beyond. Pleasure-seeking is certainly also a component of the response, and is central to *The Newsroom*'s relative success. However, while pleasure and politics are interrelated, in this chapter I emphasize the latter to consider how audience members are spurred on by entertainment to actively engage with a host of political issues and of course, each other.

This relates more broadly to an argument sometimes made about the interrelation of 'fictional' entertainment and 'non-fictional' information. Simply put, people learn about and form options surrounding significant social issues not just through news and other sources of 'factual' information but largely through entertainment media and its different ways of representing the 'real world'. This chapter lays out a foundation to understand this claim better, by showing how politics,

entertainment media and journalism relate. Such a framework helps us better appreciate the ways people make sense of things in their everyday lives, from their immediate surroundings to larger global trends.

The first section of this chapter accordingly outlines the value of popular entertainment in terms of its capacity to provoke critical reflection, demonstrating the *political in popular communication*. It also explores how a closer inspection of the discourses surrounding fictional programming often reveals much about such programs' 'real world' equivalents. The second section then looks at what *The Newsroom* re-presents, namely journalism, an institution whose societal role is traditionally grounded in claims that are precisely the inverse of entertainment. This section questions this assumption and details the *popular in political communication*. The third section pushes these first two arguments further, and offers a provocation that combining the fields of cable news and politically-oriented entertainment programming perhaps makes clearer analytic sense rather than keeping them apart. I mean this not in the familiar normative sense of castigating one, cable news, for failing its goals and looking more like the other, entertainment, but in terms of (potentially) serving the same epistemological function when viewed from the perspective of the audience. People watching Fox News, MSNBC or HBO's *The Newsroom*, this chapter argues, can all be seen to engage with a genre that I dub *semi-fictional entertainment*, which: contains narrative elements traditionally associated with fiction; relies on real-world events and issues; and allows audiences to fold these together as part of everyday sense-making and social orientation.

Popular Entertainment as Catalyst for Political Critique

In scholarly terms, one the great liberations brought about by research into popular culture was not only validating it as an object of study but was to highlight its immense meaning-making potential amongst the populace. Despite this affirmation popular communication – and to a larger extent media studies, the degree area in which it is typically housed – continues to be roundly derided by many politicians, much of the public, and (ironically) the media itself as 'soft', literally 'mickey mouse', such that it has become 'a subject that is now a byword for dumbing down' (Buckingham, 2009). This is quite bizarre when one considers that entertainment is, amongst many things: 1) more widely consumed than almost any other form of institutionally-produced communication; and 2) so commercially-formidable that industry forecasts estimate yearly revenue for the film market segment alone will top over US$100 billion globally by 2017 (PwC, 2014). This is not to dismiss valid (in certain instances) critiques of the commodification and homogenization of culture but to ignore the meaning-making significance of popular culture is also to ignore the power it both wields and contains. As Hall (1981: 447) notes, 'there is no whole, authentic, autonomous "popular culture" which lies outside the field of force and the relations of cultural power and domination.' In short people learn about society and negotiate their place within it, often through the texts of popular culture.

Going a step further, many films and TV programs not only discursively represent society, people's engagement with such entertainment products often reflect, form, and shape their political communication practices. Popular accounts are excellent in terms of providing fodder for talk and such conversation is a form of political engagement and audience sense-making. In this respect, we might benefit from thinking through what exactly the mediated practices of watching and viewing contemporary programs like *The Newsroom* implies and entails. As Couldry (2004: 121) notes, the idea of media practices raises two key questions, 'what types of things do people do in relation to media? And what types of things do people say in relation to media?' While the first question can only be surmised in general (detailed elaboration eclipses the scope of this chapter), the second is closely

related to another observation about practice, namely that 'media represent other practices and so have direct consequences for how those practices are defined and ordered' (ibid.: 123). In this sense, people don't just watch the *Newsroom*, they set time aside to view it and potentially furthermore comment on it and interact. Moreover, watching an HBO television show about cable television news is a practice that crosses supposedly distinct genre registers – politics and entertainment – and shapes normative evaluations about the dominant understandings of journalism and other key public institutions. These points are fairly evident. But what is more surprising is that when we consider these practices against the experience of watching actual news outlets every day (which most audience members commenting on the HBO viewer forums for *The Newsroom* imply they do) we see a key pattern guiding response-based practices. Choosing to watch this show (for many) provides a chance to think about what following the news means, not only for them personally but more broadly in terms of how this has traditionally been a 'duty' associated with 'informed' citizenship, what may be changing in the digital era, and what societal impact this might have.. Furthermore, as viewers watch the (fictional) *Newsroom* journalists discuss and debate how to 'make the news', audiences witness the rationale behind newsmaking made visible in a way that professional, 'real life' journalism tends to render invisible. Therein lies the power of popular communication – it provides a focussed engagement facilitated by the pleasures of entertainment, and possibly shifts personal practices and understandings of the 'real life' versions of its representations, irrespective of whether or not such representations are 'accurate'.

Other studies have raised similar themes. Van Zoonen (2007: 544), for instance, notes that not only do fictional films and television series allow audiences to describe politics, such shows 'enable people to think about the dilemmas of politics that politicians face (reflection), criticize or praise politicians for their morals and stories for their ideology (judgement), and express their hopes and ideals (fantasy).' These reactions in audiences are something producers are also often aware of, as Klein (2011) notes in her study of UK entertainment television such as *EastEnders*. While the producers shy away from positioning themselves as spokespeople on social issues, nonetheless those who make the show ensure the storylines in episodes are thoroughly researched and they present them in a manner to encourage perceptive audiences to think through the debates. Part of this politicizing of popular entertainment comes from the material specifications of television production. Television is naturalized as a visual medium, which blurs distinctions between fictional and non-fictional programming for audiences, something reinforced by common production conventions and storytelling techniques that hold irrespective of genre (Delli Carpini and Williams, 1994). To borrow from the feminist slogan, the popular oftentimes is political on TV, and looks like it too. While its depth, perspective, and accuracy of portrayals are uneven and varied, and the impact of a popular culture text on audience members is negotiable, the basic point is that popular communication gives frameworks that let viewers 'work through' private and public concerns (Ellis, 2000), a process whereby engagement can transcend the popular to influence political perceptions and values (Dahlgren, 2009).

The Role of Journalism in Contemporary Society

The long-established discourse about the purpose of journalism in society is quite well known. Aligned, indeed almost inseparable from notions of politics and democracy, journalism is assumed to: 1) be an information source for citizens that; 2) acts as a watchdog of government; and in this role 3) represents citizens' interests as publics to government; and conversely 4) mediates on behalf of government to citizens. However, digital technologies have fundamentally altered how these functions are performed and who can perform them, if perhaps not the notions themselves. The

institutional power of the mass media has been diminished and, viewed from the perspective of the audience, a number of key alternations are occurring which necessitate reframing the validity of these classic ideals in contemporary (digital) societies (see Peters and Witschge, 2015). The many well-known challenges to contemporary journalism, such as dwindling audiences, declining revenues, and decreasing public trust bring with them an undeniable tension that borders on paradox: while the discourse about journalism remains remarkably stable, the combination of technological change and audience practices dramatically challenges the industry's resolve to pursue these values, especially in the highly commercialized US media system.

So how then might we better understand the purpose of contemporary news? Audiences, journalists, and journalism studies scholars alike tend to return to democratic ambitions when asked. For example, both the Pew study stated in the introduction to this chapter and quotes like that offered by Sorkin, who explained *The Newsroom* was a journalistic 'valentine for those people who are out there fighting the good fight' (Levin, 2012), rely upon them. These common sentiments stabilize binary oppositions between news and opinion, information and entertainment, despite the fact that we have long known these divisions to be problematic; 'the opposite of news is not entertainment, as the news is often diversionary or amusing (the definition of entertainment) and what is called "entertainment" is often neither' (Delli Carpini and Williams, 2001: 162). Going back to political goals is a highly limiting approach as it tends to view journalism as inextricably intertwined with democracy, which may tend to blind us to more nuanced assessments of its purpose (Zelizer, 2013). And yet I have sympathy with such this sentiment, for if journalism is posited to be something other than an essential institution for democracy, what exactly is it? How might we do a better job answering this question? One suggestion, hinted at above, is to view journalism not from the top-down, in terms of its role in society but from the bottom-up, in terms of its actual value to people vis-à-vis their experiences in everyday life. If we accept that, viewed rhetorically, the conventional discourse of journalism is at odds with practice both in terms of what is produced and what people actually consume (see Boczkowski and Mitchelstien, 2013) then perhaps this offers us a way out. Accordingly, the brief remainder of this section makes a case for understanding contemporary television journalism not just in terms of its political communication elements but in terms of its engaging aspects for audiences, something that perhaps aligns it more closely with values traditionally associated with entertainment programming.

The most evident value of news consumption, I would argue, is not its information *per se*. Instead it is to be found in the sociocultural functions it provides audiences, such as: the (potential) for conversation it facilitates, from strangers to workplace colleagues, friends and family; the provision it gives for regular and easy orientation to the social world (such as the community or nation); and, in the case of cable news, the empathetic approbation it delivers to viewers through 'continual praise, both implicitly and explicitly, for selecting the "right" brand of news' (Peters 2010: 849). Like watching sport or seeing a blockbuster movie, news has a popular consumptive aspect that far eclipses the bounds of its content. News, especially personalized cable news, is 'popular' in two overlapping senses described by Williams (1983: 237): it is 'well-liked by many people' and is 'work deliberately setting out to win favour with the people'. In this respect, news consumption for audiences instigates associations with other aspects of everyday life and plugs into the same zeitgeist as entertainment. Its ritualistic value is primarily,

> symbolic in nature and confirm[s] and comment[s] on aspects of social reality that do not always relate directly to the media content. The media are instigators in the sense that they help constitute the ritual by creating a shared mood or mental state which organize the participants' attention and behaviour' (Larsen 2000: 272).

Watching news, especially US cable news, is thus not just about its politics but about a feeling of association to a broader public and popular concerns.

Cable News and *The Newsroom* as Semi-Fictional Entertainment

In an Americanized cable news landscape that has shifted far away from the vision which trumpeted its launch three decades ago, it seems relevant to ask what this descriptor, 'cable news' now conjures in the minds of audiences? Perhaps it provokes images of fact-based archetypical journalists covering some important political story, uncovering wrongdoing around-the-clock, independently searching for the truth. This is the calling that promotional material on cable news networks still often claims they aspire towards (Peters, 2010). But the reality of contemporary US cable news would seem to suggest a function otherwise. The trajectory – across all three major cable networks – is increasingly an unending stream of opinion-driven, debate-based, audience-centric 'politicotainment' (cf. Reigert, 2007), wherein political life is presented with values such as drama and conflict, and programming is infused with techniques such as promotional trailers and flashbacks to previous 'episodes' (Peters, 2009). As one of the buzzwords of the 1990s suggests, contemporary cable news is surely 'infotainment' in a very literal sense, incorporating storytelling techniques and elements traditionally associated with entertainment programming.

This may sound like a lament familiar to this type of journalism (see for example Franklin, 1997; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001) and indeed this grievance is at the heart of *The Newsroom* itself. While there is some merit to this argument, in remainder of this chapter I wish to get away from this familiar refrain to argue something quite different. As the previous two sections suggest, when looked at from the perspective of audiences, popular communication is frequently something political and vice versa. If we push these premises to their logical conclusion the result is a Venn diagram where the two circles, popular communication (in this case, *The Newsroom*) and political communication (in this case, cable news) in essence become one from the perspective of the audience. It really doesn't matter if a left-leaning American in the early 2000s felt the Presidency was failing because they watched political debate shows discuss George Bush on CNN or because they saw Martin Sheen play a President they could better associate with on *The West Wing* (see van Zoonen, 2005). Indeed, there was a good chance their orientation relied upon both. The point is that the realm of political news coverage and popular political fiction, in the eyes of audience members, came together as one. Similarly, Gray (2007: 80) clearly shows that 'politics and the news overlap with fan behavior and practice in many ways', from cognitive aspects like relying upon similar sites in the brain, to societal behaviours such as group formation, belonging, and emotional attachment witnessed at political rallies and fan conventions. In short, as I've argued elsewhere (Peters, 2011), politics is affective just as entertainment is often cerebral.

So what are we to make of *The Newsroom*, a fictional show (replete with well-known actors and a celebrity creator) about an actual industry (cable news), which goes the extra step of grounding each episode in real world events from the recent past (rise of Occupy Wall Street, emergence of the Tea Party, the BP oil spill, killing of Osama Bin Laden and so on)? My suggestion would be that from the perspective of the audience, the boundary between the program and the 'reality' it represents is rather meaningless. An appropriate way to describe it then, is *semi-fictional entertainment*. What I mean by this is that it possesses four key characteristics:

1) The show purports things to happen, like love triangles between two producers and an intern, or the fallout from an on-air rant, which are narrative devices solely intended to advance the story and/or engage the audience. Frequently, these transpire over multiple

episodes to generate suspense and drive ratings. These techniques, alongside the existence of celebrity interviews and fan clubs, are aspects typically associated with the realm of fictional entertainment, however;

2) Real-life events anchor each episode, real-life companies (including cable news competitors) are mentioned, real-life locations are identified. These are concrete, factual aspects from the 'real world' interwoven in the show.
3) The issues being discussed, such as the threat of terrorism, public spending of tax dollars, gun control, and so on, are contemporary concerns that, if not already felt by audience, may become palpable through engagement with program.
4) The above three elements come together in real world conversations, be they face-to-face or online, as audiences try to 'make sense' of the world and orient themselves within it. The 'spaces' of the show are folded into the 'spaces' of everyday life.

These characteristics, I would further argue, are not unique to *The Newsroom*. I would stress that one could analyse watching cable news programs such as *The Rachel Maddow Show* on MSNBC or *The O'Reilly Factor* on Fox News in a similar fashion. Recurring segments, ongoing feuds/storylines, celebrity interviews and fan clubs are a few of many aspects common to both. One could similarly say this of a focus on real-word events and issues. The fourth point above relates to findings in audience studies about the uses of news (see Madianou, 2009) and entertainment (see Gauntlett, 2008) media; both have the capacity to extend beyond the text itself to everyday contexts.

What I am asserting is simply a logical extension of a recent argument that entertainment texts on American television based on journalism act as its complement. One of the more obvious examples is the rise of satirical news, which has significant value in terms of helping young people think through social and political issues (see Jones and Baym, 2010) and improving their degree of media literacy (Peters, 2013), especially when it comes to encouraging critical readings of the news media and the value of its contributions to public discourse (see Harrington, 2010). Why then keep such 'news augments' separate analytically from 'real news' when their function seems fairly well-synthesized for audiences? In this regard, my argument shares an affinity with Bolin (2007: 61), who, in arguing against claims of the tabloidization of journalism notes, 'the journalistic institution has colonized entertainment and incorporated televised popular entertainment in particular, as well as parts of other popular culture, into journalism, rather than as a sphere outside of and in competition with it.' When considered from this perspective, I think one can persuasively say that cable news and news-based entertainment are both semi-fictional entertainment products that encourage reflection and debate on media and politics, although the degree to which one agrees with them is highly dependent on political leanings. This comes through when one analyses the audience response to *The Newsroom.*

Study Recap – The Newsroom *and Public Reflections on Journalism*

The first season of *The Newsroom* premiered on HBO on 24 June 2012. While subject to mixed critical reviews, the show was popular enough that it was renewed for a second season after only two episodes. Like many contemporary programs, audiences engaged not just by watching the program but discussing it in online fansites and viewer forums. In 2013 I studied one of the more prominent of these to consider the audience-crafted discourses surrounding the program and how these related to journalistic evaluation of the show (for details on the full study, please see Peters, 2015). To sum, after studying the top-10 topics containing 1115 lengthy[1] posts and discussions within them, it quickly became clear that audiences engaged with *The Newsroom* not just as a work of fiction, but as a

semi-fictional parallel and avenue to evaluate the role, perception, and performance of the contemporary news media, the politics of the nation, and American society.

Audience responses tended to situate two genres – entertainment programming and cable news – as pragmatically indistinguishable. Moreover, audiences in these forums were evidently aware that cable news, and journalism in general, was not a value-free, politically-neutral space. *The Newsroom* slotted neatly into this world, and discussion around it tended to perform three key functions for posters:

1. 'naming and shaming' news outlets – often including the fictional *Newsroom* itself – that were seen to be eschewing the democratic role of journalism;
2. employing the rhetoric and metanarratives of the Anglo-American objectivity regime to define 'good' news and lament the current state of journalism as a social institution; and
3. engaging in political confrontations.

Studying such reflections revealed quite a lot not just about *The Newsroom* but about people's political concerns and how they encountered issues in their everyday lives. It laid bare ideas about journalism, public information and political communication, and how citizens felt these were currently being performed by the American news media and cable news more specifically. It exposed the highly divisive and acrimonious culture of political debate and conversation that – unsurprisingly, considering the public pedagogy practiced by cable news networks – echoed familiar talking points and entrenched political positions one sees on Fox, CNN, and MSNBC.

The study offered three key conclusions based upon the specific patterns and discursive tropes found in the viewer forums and journalistic response. The first of these was an evident scepticism and lament of the current news media. Audiences and journalists alike both held a constitutive notion of a 'golden age' of American journalism, with stalwarts like Walter Cronkite and Edward R. Murrow, which acted as a de-politicized, ideal type to frame comparison. Such nostalgic perceptions of 'good journalism', whatever their accuracy, appeared alive-and-well within popular imagination. Images of both Cronkite and Murrow literarily appeared in the original opening sequence to *The Newsroom*, references to this time and its notable journalists appeared in the dialogue of multiple episodes, and – in parallel – these icons peppered journalistic commentary and viewer discussion. What was most interesting about these archetypical figures was that they were above reproach and 'stood in' as communicative shorthand to construct (familiar) narratives of contemporary decline and ethical crisis.

In a similar vein, the study also found that the discourse of media as a public good persisted, despite the fact that the US media system is highly commercialized (and thus American journalism is not a public good in the traditional economic sense, however much one might wish it were). The potency of 'public good' rhetoric was fascinating for this reason as was its ubiquity – again, across the program, the journalistic and audience response. Such faith in journalism in the abstract as a public good is even more startling in a country that lacks a strong public broadcaster. A further tension could be witnessed in that most people had some sense of the fiscal reality underpinning American journalism but either hoped news outlets wouldn't succumb to it or, more frequently, asserted that their preferred news outlet did not. This related to the third conclusion, which was that individuals' embraced critique of journalism within the forums but often lacked the critical skills to go beyond politicized accusations of bias. As noted previously in this chapter, the political-democratic discourse about journalism is robust, well-known, and relied upon heavily to discuss its role is society. However, when it came to discussing *The Newsroom* and cable news, people generally lacked the analytic skills and systematic media literacy needed to critique with any great depth. Audiences were passionately involved in the program and its storylines and there is a certain

sociocultural value to the simple fact of engaging in critical discussions about media and being forced to orient to one another over these topics irrespective of agreement. However, response to this form of entertainment at times became more of a populist response that illustrated the current tenor of American political communication – conversant with like-minded views, dismissive of others, and passionately convinced of both the rightness and righteousness of one's political point-of-view.

Conclusion: Entertainment and Journalism Rethought

This chapter has argued for a synthesis of long form, 'complex' narrative television (Mittel, 2006) in the case of *The Newsroom* and US cable news. Specifically, I've argued that both – when considered from the audiences' perspective – are better conceptualized not as distinct entities but as forms of *semi-fictional entertainment* that engage people in real world issues and are relied upon, folded into, everyday political conversation. Evaluating reception to – and the value of – entertainment products in any great depth has typically obliged scholars to simultaneously consider shifts in perception surrounding what they represent. In the case of cable news and *The Newsroom*, I would-argue that for audiences such distinctions often don't hold, and the 'real' and its 'representation' are one-and-the-same. Both evidence a broader struggle witnessed in many communicative forms over owning the terms-of-debate in the current media-saturated age and highly-commercialized (American) news landscape.

The crucial point in this regard is that *The Newsroom* is an important cultural touchstone, in concert with other semi-fictional texts surrounding journalism such as *The Daily Show*, *Last Week Tonight*, and *Good Night and Good Luck*, for debates around the contemporary value of journalism and the pressures and compromises involved in news production. Watching such programs and discussing them with others can sharpen the awareness with which audiences watch 'real' news. By this I mean evaluating the rhetorical claims of and content produced by news organizations, something quite valuable in the current antagonistic US cable news environment. In addition, watching and talking about *The Newsroom* appears to be worthwhile for helping audiences clarify and debate normative assessments around what journalism 'should be'. In this respect, the position of this entertainment media product is advantageous – it has a luxury 'real' news outlets may not amidst the daily grind of news production in a digital era. This is not unique to *The Newsroom* and indeed one might say the value of the entertainment industry in general is that it often has more time and space to reflect than the 'real world' it portrays.[2] Somewhat ironically, the much-derided escapism of popular entertainment, in this respect, may for this reason (along with its pleasurable aspects) be the field where serious contemplation by both producers and audiences alike can take place.

Notes

1. 224 topics were dedicated to *The Newsroom* on HBO, containing a range of 1-267 comments per topic as of 10 June 2012. Postings varied but many responses were lengthy; 1-2 paragraphs per comment was standard and 500-word postings weren't uncommon. This research restricted itself to the top 10 topics, containing a total of 1115 posts. Capturing the HBO posts was complicated as conventional screen capture software was unable to interact properly with the website to scroll and capture. Accordingly, individual screen captures were made manually. These images were reduced and integrated. For the most

active forum this meant 267 postings took up 54 pages. In total, utilizing this approach, 246 pages of comments were generated for analysis.

2. It's important to note that the 'value' of having time to reflect does not mean that representations in entertainment always result in something that is socioculturally valuable. We could think of endless examples, from the stereotypical representations of female characters in many video games to the representation of 'dark-skinned' ethnicity in children's cartoons, where this evidently isn't the case.

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